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Church warns Venezuela govt against overriding constitution



A woman holding a Chávez doll joined pray for the health of the president.

CARACAS (AFP) - Venezuela's Catholic church warned the government Monday it would be "morally unacceptable" to override the constitution amid an intensifying crisis over President Hugo Chavez's health.

The church weighed in with four days to go before Chavez, who is in Cuba recovering from cancer surgery, is supposed to be sworn in to a new six year term.

His vice president has argued that the swearing in can be delayed indefinitely, call-

ing it a 'formality,' and that Chavez's current administration can continue in office until a new one can be sworn in.

The opposition, however, insists his term ends on January 10 under the constitution and a new one cannot begin until he is sworn in. One opposition leader has called for street protests if the government delays the inauguration.

The Venezuelan bishops conference said Monday the constitution must be respected.

"At stake is the good of the country and the defense of ethics. To alter the constitution to attain a political objective is morally unacceptable," the conference said in a statement.

The church said the president's prolonged sickness "puts at grave risk the political and social stability of the nation."

It said the public was "confused, and a good part of it angry," because not a single medical report on his condition has been released.

Prins & Panchos selected for Carnival 59



A night of hilarity and wild antic ensued at the Aruba Entertainment Center for the first selection of Carnival royalty for Carnival 59, on Sunday evening, January 6. The selection of three sets of Prins and Pancho, (Jester) who will be the official escorts of their age-appropriate queens, is a climactic moment in each carnival season.

Young Aruban men compete to be selected in Child, Youth (teen) and Adult categories by demonstrating their talent for comedic mayhem, often deploying sarcastic, topical humor about island current events and personalities.

This year, TOB (Trip to Brazil) Carnival Group swept the competition, with their

contenders taking the title in all three age categories.

Continued on pg 3

NOW OPEN!

KFC @ Palm Beach

The image shows the exterior of a KFC restaurant located at Palm Beach. The building is red with a white trim around the windows and doors. The KFC logo is prominently displayed on the side of the building. A large sign above the entrance also features the KFC logo and the words "NOW OPEN! KFC @ Palm Beach". In front of the restaurant, there is a small lawn area with a few trees and a paved walkway leading to the entrance. The overall appearance is that of a standard fast-food restaurant.

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ATA announces: Aruba's tourism year ends with excellent growth in December 2012



Min. of Tourism Oduber

Aruba's Minister of Tourism, Transport and Labor, Otmar Oduber, was joined by CEO of the Aruba Tourism Authority(ATA), Ronella Tjin Asjoe-Croes in conveying the final statistics for Aruba's tourism performance for 2012. They were joined by Joanne Arends of the Aruba Airport Authority (AAA) yesterday morning for a press conference in the official government press room in Oranjestad.

December of last year proved a particularly encouraging month with an increase in arrivals of 10.9% over the last month of 2011. This pushed the overall annual growth to 4.1% over 2011, despite extreme loss of arrivals due to the occurrence of Hurricane Sandy in October. Aruba welcomed 8,827 more visitors in December 2012 than the year before.

2012 also experienced the highest overall number of visitors since 2007; Aruba welcomed 906,099 stay over visitors. Cruise ship arrivals were down from 2011 by 3%, largely due to 15 cancelled calls from January through April due technical issues and weather, and a record-breaking month for cruise arrivals in March of 2011 of 110,363, compared to 84,628 for March of this year.



ATA's Tjin Asjoe-Croes

Though there were decreased arrivals during "high season," the "low season" summer and fall cruise ship arrivals increased by 21%. The large increase in stay over visitors balances this out, to result in the 4.1% overall tourism growth figures for 2012.

Taking into consideration contracts for increased calls at Oranjestad Harbor, cruise ship arrivals are projected to grow in 2013 to 729,831 visitors over 582,111 in 2012. This is broken down into a projected increase of 3.82% in high season and 189% increase of 122,312 during low season.

Overall growth in December was shown in all three of Aruba's major markets, the U.S., Latin America and Europe. Reduced arrivals from Holland and England were balanced out by substantial increases from Scandinavia and Italy. Increasing airlift between emerging strong Latin American economies such as Chile and Argentina has helped to establish the popularity of Aruba in those countries. The northeast U.S. still remains Aruba's principal market, with over 60% coming from that area.

Ms. Arends advised that 2012 was a banner year for arrivals of paying passengers



Joanne Arends of AAA

through Reina Beatrix International Airport, and increased airlift and routes will produce 8096 more seats

bringing vacationers and business people to Aruba during the winter months of 2012-2013, over the previous year.

Minister Oduber credits the Aruba Tourism Authority's tireless efforts and innovative team with Aruba's increasing tourism growth despite a generally sluggish economy, and election year in the U.S., and a major natural disaster. "We believe Aruba's "One Happy Island" continues to be associated with guaranteed quality and value as a destination," commented Ms. Tjin Ajoe-Croes. "Our beautiful resorts and dedication has earned us this

reputation, assisted by the consistent and positive word-of-mouth promotion we receive from satisfied tourists."

"The Ministry of Tourism will continue to strive to stimulate new markets, provide means to maintain the quality of Aruba's tourism product, and keep interest high in Aruba as a destination," concluded Minister Oduber.

"The ATA has set goals for Aruba's continued tourism growth, with solid plans to see their projections realized. I commend them for an excellent job over the past year."

By Rosalie Klein

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Raquel Werleman is Aruba's new Millionaire



On January 7th 2013, Raquel Werleman of Cadushi Largo became the happy winner of the grand jackpot of Aruba's Mini Mega Lotto. Raquel bought her ticket as a wild card on December 28 in the afternoon hours at Kas Ariba Lottery outlet.

That evening a colleague sent her the winning numbers and when she compared her numbers she was pleasantly surprised that she had the lucky numbers and had won Afl.1.300,000.

Raquel visited the main office of Aruba Lotto to claim her prize, then she visited Kas Ariba Lottery and later, her colleagues at Setar N.V.

Raquel's family appears to have a string of luck since

this past April 2012 a brother won the lotto and collected Afls.360,000 with number he also bought at Kas Ariba Lottery outlet.

Raquel said, ..."I'm happy that more Arubans are winning the prizes. That is very important. My advice to Lotto is to continue selling the big Mini Megas." Raquel doesn't know yet what she will do with the money; how she will be investing it.

Visit Aruba Lotto online at www.lottoaruba.com and their Facebook page for all information regarding games, winning numbers and the special prizes. Also, be sure to tune in to TeleAruba, Channel 13 for the drawings every midday and Monday to Saturday evenings at 9 pm.

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Honduras police seize \$50,000 golden, bejeweled AK-47

Tegucigalpa (AFP) - Honduran authorities have seized a \$50,000 gold-plated AK-47 encrusted with diamonds and emeralds, which is believed to belong to Mexico's Zetas drug cartel, a top prosecutor said Monday.

The assault rifle was among an arsenal concealed in false compartments within five of 11 vehicles that were seized Friday in a ranch outside Ciudad Jardin de Choloma, 300 kilometers north of the capital Tegucigalpa.

Police estimated that the 32 weapons -- which included grenade launchers, grenades, night vision goggles and bullet-proof vests -- are worth \$2 million. The AK-47 also came with two silver magazines.

The Zetas, a gang founded by military deserters, is one of the most violent cartels in Mexico, where a brutal drug war has killed 70,000 people in the last six years.

Elmar responds with extra service during power outage

Wanda Broeksema, Client Relations spokesperson for ELMAR informed the press that ELMAR is well aware of their role with their clients, hence the reason for providing additional service during difficulties. Such a difficult moment came last weekend when on Saturday ELMAR experienced a sudden power outage as a result of a malfunction at WEB.

Both technical as well as administrative personnel were available to respond to the many queries from clients during the entire day.

As a result of a malfunction at WEB on Saturday, ELMAR was suddenly unable to provide electric power to their clients. Immediately ELMAR's technical crew stationed themselves at the various switching stations located strategically around the island. There they waited on WEB for electricity which they could send to ELMAR supply centers.

ELMAR's clients were satisfied to have received information and an explanation regarding the situation and about what exactly was being done to remedy the situation.



Elmar hereby, wishes to thank all clients for their patience as well as a special thanks to their personnel who did their utmost to provide excellent service to their

clients during what were very critical moments.

Their technical team also did a great job of putting the power back on in a relatively short period of time.

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Minister Richard Visser brainstorms with Tourism pioneer Rory Arends



Just before the close of the year, Minister Visser was host to Rory Arends, long considered one of Aruba's tourism pioneers. Arends visited the Minister to present him a copy of his newly published book: *Tourism: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*.

In his book Arends describes the development of tourism on Aruba and the influence that tourism has had in the overall development of the island. Arends indicated that he is convinced that

Aruba is an excellent destination for becoming a medical tourism destination. He recounted how back in the 1980's there was a proposition for converting the Bushiri and Sheraton Hotels into rehabilitation centers for post traumatic cases.

The Minister is of the opinion that Aruba has excellent opportunities for developing medical tourism, as well as to continue developing sports tourism, which he asserts is heading in the right direction.

Visser sighted the cancer center to be established at IMSAN together with Baptist Health of South Florida and how that is going to set Aruba off to the right direction per adventure for developing medical tourism.

Visser was grateful for the exchange of ideas with Rory Arends and to learn of plans of the past on the topic of medical tourism and what can potentially be developed in the future.



Combat Dengue

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IMF chief calls for second I. Coast golden age

ABIDJAN (AFP) - International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde on Monday called for "a second Ivorian economic miracle" on a visit to Abidjan, where she met with President Alassane Ouattara.

"The time for a second Ivorian economic miracle has come," after a prolonged military and political crisis that shook the West African state, Lagarde said in a speech to lawmakers.

A French colony in the 1960s and 1970s, Ivory Coast enjoyed considerable economic advances after inde-

pendence, becoming the world's leading cocoa exporter.

Civil war and political turmoil led in the past decade to a deep decline.

"Renewal is born of reconciliation, of working together, after a traumatic period of division," the IMF director general said.

Lagarde praised Ouattara, a former Africa head at the IMF, for "succeeding in putting Ivory Coast back on the right path" and for restoring ties with international financial institutions.

Ouattara promised La-

garde on Monday that the country would respect its commitments so as to "continue to be considered a good student" by the IMF.

After a deep recession caused by a bitter power struggle in 2010-2011, which cost some 3,000 lives, the country managed to attain an economic growth rate of "more than 8.5 percent" in 2012, Lagarde said.

She pledged continued IMF support to the Ivorian authorities and said that their aim of making Ivory Coast an emerging economy by 2020 was "not just wishful thinking".



PHILIPPINES, Manila : AFP photo depicts the replica of the religious icon the Black Nazarene, seen during a procession in Manila on January 7, 2013. Filipino pilgrims began arriving in the capital Manila for the annual religious festival that takes place on January 9. The Black Nazarene, known to devotees in Spanish as Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno (Filipino: Poong Itim na Nazareno; English: "Our Father Jesus [the] Nazarene") is a life-sized, dark wooden sculpture of Jesus Christ carrying the cross, while representing his passion and suffering and is believed to be miraculous by many Filipino Catholics. Originally with fair complexion, it turned dark after it survived a burning ship on its arrival from Mexico. The image is currently in the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo district, Manila, Philippines, where it is venerated weekly with Friday Novena Masses. The statue is celebrated on three annual occasions, and comes out of its own basilica each New Years Day, Good Friday, on January 9, celebrating its transfer and enshrinement in the present Basilica, and is attended by several million devotees. The statue wears a crown of thorns atop a braided woven wig made of dyed abaca material, and carries a black life-size cross, adorned with brass gold-plated ornamentation on its cap. The statue itself also has its own wardrobe, often made of expensive fabric, gold bullion thread, fancy embroidery and trimmings. In addition, a gold-plated metal belt bearing its name also hangs on its waist, with a golden chain-ball symbolizing the Flagellation of Christ. The statue is always on a bended knee posture, symbolizing the exhaustion and agony of carrying the cross. Furthermore, the statue is always barefoot and always rests on its own wooden base or peana. The external base supporting the statue during its procession is called a "Carroza" or Carriage while the rope used during its procession is referred to as "Andas", from the Spanish rootword "Andar" or to move forward.

Clinton returns to applause and a football helmet



WASHINGTON (AFP) - Secretary of State Hillary Clinton received a standing ovation from her staff and an American football helmet to protect her from Washington's hard knocks as she returned to work after a health scare.

A month to the day since she was last seen on official duties when she flew back from a trip to Europe on December 7, Clinton chaired her regular weekly Monday meeting with her closest staff and advisors.

"It is a great day here in the department... Secretary Clinton is back to work," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said, adding that the 75 people present at the meeting had given her a standing ovation.

Clinton, 65, who suffered a blood clot to her head after a fall in December "looks fantastic, she seems to be terrific," Nuland said. "She is in the pink, literally. She's wearing a brilliant pink jacket today."

As a joke, the staff presented her with a white football helmet, with "lots of good padding" bearing the State Department seals, and a blue football jersey printed with the words "Clinton" and "112," to signify the number of countries she has visited during her four-year tenure, Nuland said.

Deputy Secretary Tom Nides presented the gift in a big box, handing it over with a warning about life in Washington being "a contact sport," she added.

Clinton had first succumbed to a virulent stomach virus, but then became dehydrated and fell, suffering a concussion. Doctors say the blood clot found later in a vein behind her right ear most likely resulted from the fall.

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Kuwait jails second tweeter for insulting emir

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) - Kuwait's lower court on Monday handed a two-year jail term to an opponent for allegedly insulting the emir on Twitter in the second such sentence in as many days, a human rights activist said.

"Ayyad al-Harbi was sentenced to two years in jail," director of the Kuwait Society for Human Rights Mohammad al-Humaidi said on

his Twitter account.

According to the ruling, Harbi must start serving the sentence immediately, even before the outcomes of his challenges in the appeals and supreme courts are known, Humaidi said.

On Sunday, the same court handed an identical sentence to Rashed al-Enezi, who faced similar charges. Enezi was arrested from the courtroom and sent to jail.

Prins & Panchos selected for Carnival 59...Continued from pg 1

The Prins and Panchos for 2013 are:
Infantil (Child) "Prins Gangnam," Zyqu E. E. Guerrero and Pancho: "Style," Jahmani J.J. Eisdien"

Hubenil (Youth) Prins "BA Busca" Marcel Margin Kock and Pancho "Ba Haya" Rendell Emanuel Gross

Grandi (Adult) Prins "Bai Gafña," Jermaine Toppenberg and Pancho "Baca," Bryan Courtar

The newly elected rulers of Aruban revelry will be seen in stunning costume at all upcoming parades, as well as playing an integral role in choosing the queens in their age categories. This year's short carnival season will guarantee they will be quite busy until its end on February 12.

The next major event of Carnival 59 will be on Saturday, January 12, at the Aruba Entertainment Center, with the selection of the Roadmarch and Calypso king or queen in the Child and Youth categories.

Grueling Senate gauntlet ahead for Obama nominee

WASHINGTON (AFP) - In announcing two important cabinet picks on Monday, President Barack Obama launched a grueling and contentious vetting process in which approval for his nominees is likely but far from guaranteed.

A president makes some 8,000 nominations to governmental posts over the course of his administration, about 1,200 of which require Senate confirmation, including cabinet secretaries, federal judges and top agency officials.

A nominee's background is exhaustively scoured by the FBI for conflicts of interest, ethical lapses, and anything with the whiff of scandal that might derail the process.

Dutch Patriot missiles head for Turkey's Syria border

VREDEPEEL, The Netherlands (AFP) - The Netherlands' Patriot missile batteries on Monday began their journey to fellow NATO member Turkey where they are to defend civilians near the border from a possible Syrian attack.

Around 160 vehicles carrying the missiles and equipment for 300 Dutch support troops left the Bestkazerne military base in Vredepeel in the southeastern Netherlands on Monday morning, an AFP correspondent reported.

The convoy is headed for Eemshaven port in the north of the country from where it will sail for Turkey and is expected to arrive around January 22.

The US and Germany are also sending Patriot surface-to-air missiles to southeastern Turkey following a request from Ankara because of the threat of the deadly 21-month civil war in Syria spilling

Once that is done, the Senate takes up one of its key responsibilities under the US Constitution: vetting and making the final decision on approving a nominee.

Obama named former Republican senator Chuck Hagel on Monday to be his defense secretary and his top counterterrorism adviser, John Brennan, to head the CIA.

Brennan is to replace General David Petraeus, who resigned last year following a sex scandal. Hagel would replace outgoing Pentagon chief Leon Panetta.

Nominees appear before the Senate committee with responsibility for the dossier in question -- for Brennan it will be the Senate Select Intelligence Committee and for

Hagel, the Senate Armed Services Committee -- which conduct another intensive examination into their lives, during lengthy public hearings.

The televised hearings represent a moment of high political drama and are seen as a key test of the nominee's ability to run a gauntlet of tough political inquisitors without major slip-ups or gaffes.

One of the most famous Senate nomination processes saw the rejection of conservative judge Robert Bork, tapped in 1987 by then president Reagan for a post on the US Supreme Court.

His confirmation hearings famously resulted in the coining of the term "borked" -- unusually used by the US right for what it considers an unfair partisan rejection of a conservative figure based on his views or ideology.

Four years ago, Obama's choice for health and human services secretary, Tom Daschle, never even got as far as a Senate hearing, after it emerged that the former Senate Democratic leader and millionaire lobbyist had failed to pay about \$140,000 in taxes.

over.

The Turkish request came after repeated cross-border shelling from Syria, including an October attack that killed five civilians.

The Dutch Patriots and support troops will be tasked with defending the city of Adana, population 1.5 million, which lies around 100 kilometres (over 60 miles) from Syria.

Mission commander Lieutenant Colonel Marcel Buis told journalists that 30 Dutch troops would fly out on Tuesday to begin setting up and the remaining 270 troops would fly out on January 21.

The US began deploying its Patriots on Saturday, while the German missiles are to arrive in Turkey on January 21.

Syria's allies Iran and Russia oppose the Patriot deployment, fearing that it could spark regional conflict also drawing in NATO.

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Police choke up describing Colorado massacre

CENTENNIAL, Colorado (AFP) - Police described harrowing scenes after the Colorado theater shooting Monday, including blood "sloshing" in one officer's car, while the alleged gunman was strangely relaxed when arrested.

A number of officers choked back tears at a preliminary hearing for James Holmes, accused of killing 12 people and injuring dozens more at a midnight screening in Aurora, outside Denver, in July.

As relatives pulled out their handkerchiefs in court, another first responder recalled finding the youngest victim of the shooting, a six-year-old girl, with no pulse amid the carnage.

They were speaking at the start of a week-long hearing to decide whether there is

enough evidence for a full trial of the 25-year-old, accused of opening fire at the premiere of the Batman movie "The Dark Knight Rises."

The Aurora massacre revived the perennial US debate over gun control -- an issue re-ignited even more intensely by last month's shooting of 20 young children at a Connecticut elementary school.

Officer Justin Grizzle, a former paramedic, said he almost slipped over in a "huge amount of blood" as he entered the back entrance to the Century 16 movie theater.

As ambulances struggled to cope with the scale of the slaughter, Grizzle described how he transported six critically ill victims in four trips to area hospitals.

Ghana's Mahama sworn in as president after disputed vote



Ghanaian President John Mahama is sworn-in by Chief Justice Georgina Wood (R) at Independence Square, Accra

ACCRA (AFP) - Ghana's John Dramani Mahama was sworn in as president on Monday at a ceremony attended by thousands in the capital but boycotted by the opposition, which has challenged the election results.

Mahama, who initially became head of state following the death of his predecessor John Atta Mills in July, pledged to build on the west African nation's economic success in a speech after taking the oath.

The 54-year-old writer and Afrobeat music fan from

Ghana's north, who recently published a well-received memoir, pledged to improve the country's infrastructure.

"We as a country have inherited a powerful legacy, and we are beneficiaries of a mighty history," Mahama, dressed in a flowing white robe, told a crowd that included African heads of state, foreign dignitaries and average Ghanaians.

He added that "nevertheless, there's still a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done.... Bridges, schools and hospitals must be built....

We must continue to invest in our agricultural sector and grow our economy."

Observer groups hailed the December 7 polls as another successful election in a country viewed as a stable democracy in turbulent West Africa.

The party of main opposition candidate Nana Akufo-Addo has however alleged the vote was stolen and challenged the results in court.

Official results showed Mahama with 50.7 percent of the vote to Akufo-Addo's 47.7 percent.

The stakes were especially high for the country of some 24 million people, with the newly elected president in charge of a growing stream of oil revenue.

West Africa's second-largest economy and a long-time producer of gold and cocoa, Ghana started pumping oil in 2010 and now produces 105,000 barrels per day.

With oil flowing and Ghana's economy growing at a rate of 14.3 percent in 2011, how Mahama invests the country's boom money will be closely watched.

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International News**Al-Qaeda claims Iraq New Year's Eve attacks**

BAGHDAD (AFP) - Al-Qaeda's front group in Iraq has claimed a wave of attacks across Iraq in the run-up to Shiite mourning rituals on New Year's Eve that killed 23 people, the SITE Monitoring Service said on Monday.

The Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) also trumpeted its ability to launch the attacks despite heavy security put in place for Shiite pilgrims as they walked to the shrine city of Karbala for the annual rituals for a revered figure in Shiite Islam.

The December 31 attacks struck in more than a dozen towns and cities and also left 83 people wounded, officials said.

"In continuation of the series of waves launched by the War Ministry of the Islamic State of Iraq... Allah is pleased for the mujahedeen to direct a new wave of strikes against targets that were carefully selected," ISI said in statement posted on the Internet, according to a translation provided by SITE.

"Most of the groups were successful in reaching their targets, despite the security alert by the Safavid government and their gathering of forces in preparation for these operations, and in protection for the season of their polytheistic visits to the graves of those they worship in Karbala."

It was making a pejorative reference to the Shiite-led government in Baghdad, implying that it was under the domination of formerly Safavid-ruled neighbouring Iran.

The attacks came in the lead-up to Arbaeen commemorations, which climaxed on

Thursday when Shiites marked 40 days after the Ashura anniversary commemorating the slaying of Imam Hussein, one of Shiite Islam's most revered figures, by the armies of the caliph Yazid in 680 AD.

Sunni militants often use the rituals as an opportunity to increase attacks against Shiites.

Al-Qaeda's front group is widely seen as weaker than during the peak of Iraq's sectarian bloodshed from 2006 to 2008, but is still capable of carrying out mass-casualty attacks on a regular basis.

'Gun Appreciation Day' to be held in US

WASHINGTON (AFP) - American gun enthusiasts can express their zeal on an upcoming "Gun Appreciation Day" right before Barack Obama is sworn in for a second term as president.

A new coalition of gun rights and conservative groups is urging Americans to show support for the right to carry firearms by turning out in large numbers on January 19 at gun stores and firing ranges. Obama's swearing in is to be take place two days later.

"The Obama administration has shown that it is more than willing to trample the Constitution to impose its dictates upon the American people," said Gun Appreciation Day chairman Larry Ward.

In the wake of the shooting last month in Connecticut which claimed the lives of 20 small children and six elemen-

Syria opposition cold-shoulders Assad; NATO flexes

DAMASCUS (AFP) - Syria's domestic opposition on Monday snubbed a call to dialogue from President Bashar al-Assad, as NATO powers challenged the leader's defiant grip on power while dispatching Patriot missile batteries to neighbouring Turkey.

The cold shoulder by the National Coordination Body (NCB) for Democratic Change in Syria, a tolerated opposition group separate from the internationally recognised Syrian National Coalition, left Assad's proposal without any takers.

And the common front by the United States, France, Britain and Turkey accentuated the international isolation Assad is suffering, a day after he gave a speech declaring he would not stop pounding "terrorist" rebels.

tary school workers, Obama said he will support a new bill to restore a ban on military-style assault weapons.

Alan Gottlieb, founder of the Second Amendment Foundation and chairman of the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, said: "We need to ban politicians who assault our rights, not firearms that are used thousands of times a day to protect lives and property from criminal attack."

The second amendment to the US constitution guarantees the right to bear arms.

The pro-gun day is the initiative of a dozen or so associations which say they expect support from some 50 million Americans. The country's most powerful gun lobby, the National Rifle Association, is not among the organizers.

In the speech, Assad urged talks with opposition elements he deemed acceptable, explicitly excluding the main exiled opposition as "killers" dominated by non-Syrians and working for foreign masters.

But the head of the NCB, Hassan Abdel Azim, told a news conference in Damascus his group "will not take part in a national dialogue before violence stops," political prisoners were released, humanitarian aid was delivered to conflict-torn areas, and missing Syrians were highlighted in a statement.

He also stated "there won't be direct negotiations or dialogue with the regime," but only within a framework headed by joint UN-Arab League peace envoy Lakhdar Brahimi.

The NATO powers were even blunter.

Assad has lost touch with reality, Washington and Paris said, while London branded as "empty" the Syrian leader's promise to hold dialogue.

The Syrian president was guilty of "state terrorism" by pursuing a civil war that has killed more than 60,000 people since it started 21 months ago according to the UN, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said.

As if to underline the

NATO's rejection of Assad's position, Dutch Patriot missile batteries on Monday left the Netherlands in a convoy for Turkey, where they will be set up as a defence against any aerial threat from Syria.

Some 400 US troops have already arrived in Turkey to man other US Patriot missile batteries that will be in place by the end of this month, joining two German Patriot systems also being sent.

The deployments have been strongly criticised by Syria's main ally Iran, even as the Islamic republic was believed to keep up a flow of money, military advisors and, according to the United States, weapons to Assad's regime.

On Monday, Tehran said it supported Assad's "comprehensive" plan to restore peace but made no mention of its own six-point "peace plan" for Syria which has been largely ignored internationally.

The opposition Syrian National Coalition said Assad's declaration ruling out any dialogue with the rebels and his insistence on staying in power made any negotiations impossible. Analysts said it appeared Assad thought himself with enough of a military advantage to make such an uncompromising address.



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Health & Living

Maldives girl faces flogging after alleged rape

MALE (AFP) - A 15-year-old in the Maldives whose father is accused of repeatedly raping her and killing the resulting baby risks being flogged for "fornication" with another man under the nation's strict Islamic law, a police source said Monday.

In the course of inquiries into the rape case, investigators say they unearthed evidence of the girl having had consensual sex with another man, which is an offence in the Indian Ocean holiday destination, the source told AFP.

Women, including minors, having consensual sex outside marriage can be charged in the Maldives, where convicts can be publicly flogged. Minors receive the punishment when they reach 18, the age of majority.

The child's step-father is accused by police of repeatedly raping the girl and fathering a child by her which he subsequently murdered. The girl's mother has been charged with helping dispose of the infant's body, police said.

Police spokesman Hassan Haneef declined to give details saying that Maldivian common law did not allow the

Korean sports star's suicide echoes death of actress-wife

SEOUL (AFP) - Police confirmed Monday that a former baseball star and ex-husband of a top South Korean actress, whose 2008 suicide shocked the country, took his own life over the weekend.

Cho Sung-Min, a former pitcher for Japanese baseball team Yomiuri Giants, was found dead early Sunday with a belt around his neck by his girlfriend in the bathroom of her Seoul apartment.

"The autopsy result showed death due to hanging," Yonhap news agency quoted a senior police officer as saying. "We've concluded the case as suicide."

In a final text to his girlfriend, Cho had written: "Thank you for everything. Hang tough even after I am gone."

The 39-year-old was the former husband of the hugely popular actress Choi Jin-Sil, who took her own life in similar fashion in 2008, four years

discussion of any case involving a minor.

The local Haveeru newspaper quoted an unnamed official from the prosecutor's office saying that the fornication charge was unrelated to the rape which had been separately dealt with.

The legal system of the Maldives, a nation of 330,000 Sunni Muslims known for its coral-fringed islands and sandy beaches, has elements of Islamic Sharia law as well as English common law.

The country carries out the flogging of women despite calls from the UN Human Rights Council to drop the practice.

In September, a Maldivian court ordered a public flogging for a 16-year-old girl who confessed to having pre-marital sex. Her 29-year-old lover was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

The gang-rape last month in the Indian capital of a 23-year-old student who subsequently died has also sparked protests over crime against women in neighbouring South Asian nations including Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

after their marriage ended.

Choi, who had two children with Cho, was found hanging from a length of elastic at her Seoul home.

Relatives and friends said she had been depressed since her divorce and troubled by rumours circulating on the Internet that she had caused another actor's suicide by demanding repayment of debts he owed her.

Her death shocked the country and prompted a police crackdown on cyber-bullying.

In 2010 Choi's younger brother, singer Choi Jin-Young, also hanged himself while suffering from severe depression.

Suicide is the most common cause of death among those in their 20s and 30s in South Korea, which has the highest suicide rate among member nations of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.



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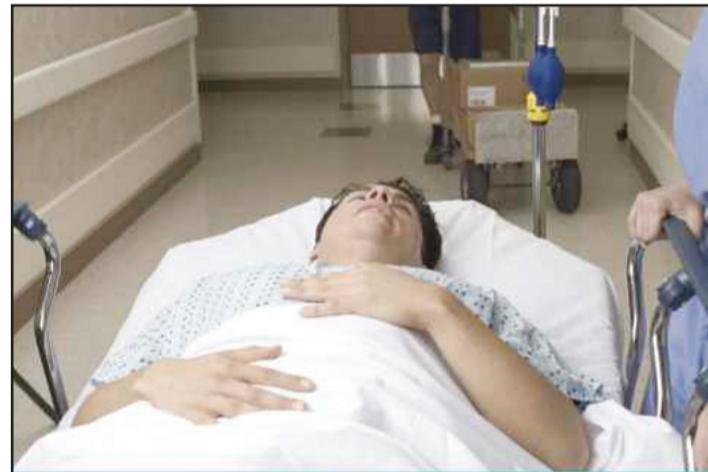
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Alcohol poisoning



-- Alcohol poisoning is a serious — and sometimes deadly — consequence of drinking large amounts of alcohol in a short period of time. Drinking too much too quickly can affect your breathing, heart rate and gag reflex and potentially lead to coma and death.

Binge drinking — rapidly downing five or more drinks in a row — is a main cause of alcohol poisoning. Alcohol poisoning can also occur when you accidentally or intentionally drink household products that contain alcohol.

A person with alcohol poisoning needs immediate medical attention. If you suspect someone has alcohol poisoning, call for emergency medical help right away.

Alcohol poisoning treatment consists of providing breathing support and intravenous fluids and vitamins until the alcohol is completely out of the body.

Symptoms

Alcohol poisoning symptoms include:

- Confusion, stupor
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Slow breathing (less than eight breaths a minute)
- Irregular breathing (a gap of

How much is too much?

Unlike food, which can take hours to digest, alcohol is absorbed quickly by your body — long before most other nutrients. But, it takes a lot more time for your body to get rid of the alcohol you've consumed.

Most alcohol is processed by your liver, and it takes about one hour for your liver to process (metabolize) the alcohol in one drink.

What happens to your body when you drink?

Alcohol depresses the nerves that control involuntary actions such as breathing, heartbeat and your gag reflex, which keeps you from choking. Drinking too much alcohol can slow and, in some cases, shut down these functions. Your body temperature can also drop (hypothermia), leading to cardiac arrest. And your blood sugar level can fall low enough to cause seizures.

Your drug use: Combining alcohol with other drugs — including some prescription medications — greatly increases your risk of a fatal alcohol overdose.



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Sci-Tech

Many still unaccounted for in Australia fires: police

SYDNEY (AFP) - Australian police said many people remained unaccounted for Monday but no deaths had yet been recorded in fire-ravaged Tasmania state, as large parts of the nation braced for dangerous conditions.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard toured the shaken southern island, where more than 100 homes were razed in catastrophic heat and wind by fast-moving blazes that continued to burn across the state.

Tasmanian police said they had searched 245 properties in the worst-hit areas by Monday morning including 90 badly damaged or destroyed buildings.

Acting Tasmania police commissioner Scott Tilyard added that there had been about 500 missing person's reports following the fires, including from interstate and overseas, with "more serious concerns" for about 100 people.

Tilyard said it would be a "period of time to come yet" before there was any certainty on fatalities.

Gillard urged Australians to be vigilant in coming days, with scorching temperatures predicted in several states and scores of blazes already burning.

In New South Wales, Australia's most populous state, the mercury was expected to hit near-record levels, with temperatures in Sydney forecast to peak at 43 degrees Cel-

sium (109 Fahrenheit) on Tuesday.

Similar conditions were expected in neighbouring Victoria state, scene of the deadly Black Saturday firestorm that killed 173 people in 2009, Australia's worst natural disaster of modern times.

Some 13 million of Australia's 23 million population live in Victoria and New South Wales.

The prime minister called on those living in danger zones to plan ahead and decide in advance whether they would evacuate or stay and defend their property if fire struck.

NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said the weather would bring the state's worst fire danger for "many, many years", with catastrophic conditions expected in some areas.

Blazes were also already raging in the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory and South Australia and Queensland states.

Police said initial investigations of the Tasmania fires suggested that they ignited accidentally as residents who narrowly escaped the fire front described darkness as it approached.

Wildfires are a fact of life in the vast but sparsely populated arid continent, particularly in the hot summer months between December and February.

Lithuanians recycle Christmas trees into biofuel



ILNIUS (AFP) - Having brought joy to Lithuanian families over the holidays, Christmas trees will now warm them through the rest of winter after being converted into biofuel.

A local waste collection company has set up special containers at shopping malls and residential blocks in 12 cities around the Baltic EU state, urging residents to donate their now needless pines or firs.

"We were delighted by the

beautiful Christmas trees during the holidays, and they can leave us nicely by becoming biofuel and warming our homes," Inga Kovalionok of the Ecoservice company told AFP on Monday.

She said she hopes the initiative will also raise public awareness about recycling.

Ecoservice expects to collect some 700 cubic meters of trees and then hand them over to biofuel producers.

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Post-smartphone era coming, CES told

LAS VEGAS (AFP) - The era of the smartphone is rapidly becoming a post-smartphone era, a key tech industry analyst said Sunday ahead of the opening of the world's biggest technology show.

Shawn DuBravac, chief economist at the Consumer Electronics Association, told a gathering that the smartphone has become so successful it is become a hub for people's digital lives, and less of a communications device.

"I think we are entering a post-smartphone era," he told journalists ahead of Tuesday's opening of the International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

He said 65 percent of time spent on smartphones now is in "non communication activities" such as apps for health, entertainment or other activities. "We have moved away not only from telephony but from communications being the primary part of these devices," he said.

DuBravac said this is among the key trends being watched as tens of thousands gather to show off the latest wares in global trillion-dollar technology sector.

Another trend is the high-density screens which are being developed for smartphones, tablets, computers and bigger devices such as televisions.

Because people have higher-quality screens, "We are going

to demand high resolution images, and that will have an impact on a variety of Internet services.

Still, DuBravac said the so-called ultra-HD televisions

touted by some makers has been slow to catch on because of high costs.

Only around 1.5 million of these TVs are expected to be sold annually by 2016, he said.

Stormy weather, heavy rains lash Israel, Palestinians



JERUSALEM (AFP) - Stormy weather, including high winds and heavy rainfall, lashed Israel and the Palestinian territories on Monday, downing powerlines and trees and causing several injuries. "The storms injured six people, most of whom were lightly hurt when trees were knocked over," Israeli police spokeswoman Luba Samri told AFP. Israeli military radio said winds were gusting at speeds of up to 120 kilometres per hour (74 miles per hour) and in neighbourhoods across Jerusalem, the results were clear. Trees were toppled at the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif complex that houses the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa mosques, and branches were strewn in streets across the city. Electricity outages caused by downed powerlines were reported throughout the country. The stormy weather came as Orthodox Christians in the Holy Land celebrated Christmas on Monday.

Finance

Oil prices fall amid weak US energy demand

LONDON (AFP) - Oil prices retreated slightly on Monday as weak energy demand and concerns over more fiscal battles in Washington tempered news of growth in the US jobs market, analysts said.

New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in February shed 11 cents to \$92.98 a barrel.

Brent North Sea crude for February dropped 30 cents to \$111.01 in late London deals.

Official data on Friday showed that the US economy generated 155,000 jobs in December, and the unemployment rate held at 7.8 percent.

However, a separate US government report last week showing softer fuel demand outweighed that news, Phillip Futures said in a market commentary.

Weaker US energy demand "added to bearish concerns about oil markets, which have been closely monitoring economic data for signals about consumption, which is under pressure because of the struggling economy", the broker added.

The United States is the

world's biggest oil consuming nation and the health of its economy is a key influence on crude prices.

Other analysts said that markets remained concerned over more brinkmanship in the US Congress after last week's 11th-hour deal that averted the fiscal cliff of tax rises and spending cuts which threatened to tip the economy into recession.

While the lawmakers put off the huge tax rises on many wage earners, an agreement on spending cuts was put off until the end of February, when they must also hammer out a deal to raise the country's borrowing limit.

Iran revealed that its oil exports had slumped by 40 percent in the past nine months because of tough Western sanctions.

"There has been a 40 percent decrease in oil sales and a 45 percent decrease in repatriating oil money," Oil Minister Rostam Qasemi was quoted as saying, in a reversal of his previous denials of any decline at all.

Qasemi made his comments

to the Iranian parliament's budget commission, according to the ISNA news agency citing MPs.

The minister said the final figures for the current Iranian calendar year, which ends in March 2013, would show "a significant decrease" in crude export revenues, but he did not provide any numbers.

The admission by Qasemi was significant, given that he was one of the officials who up to now had been most adamant in claiming that Iran's crucial oil exports were entirely unaffected by US and EU sanctions.

The international sanctions targeting Iran are intended to choke the country's revenues used for its disputed nuclear programme, and to force it to the negotiating table.

Iran insists the programme is for purely peaceful purposes, and denies Western and Israeli allegations that it wants to manufacture nuclear weapons. It is forging on with uranium enrichment and says it will survive the Western pressure.



Current as of: 01/07/2013	Currency Code	Buying rate banknotes	Buying Cheques	Selling Rate
U.S.A.	USD	1.77	1.78	1.80
Dutch Antilles	ANG	98.00	100.00	100.20
Canada	CAD	1.77	1.79	1.82
Britain	GBP	2.80	2.85	2.90
Switzerland	CHF	191.71	192.43	193.50
Netherlands	EUR	230.59	232.69	234.57
Sweden	SEK	25.91	26.63	27.81
Denmark	DKK	30.23	30.95	31.69
Norway	NOK	30.67	31.39	32.35
Japan	JPY	214.88	216.84	204.90

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MADRID : People hold placards reading "No cuts" as they take part in a demonstration organized by Spanish health workers to denounce budget cuts and privatisations in health services, in Madrid on January 7, 2013.

Bank of America to pay \$11.6 bn in Fannie Mae deal

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Bank of America said Monday it would pay \$11.6 billion to settle claims on soured loans sold to government-backed mortgage finance giant Fannie Mae during the home price bubble.

Under the agreements, Bank of America Corp. said it would pay \$3.55 billion in cash to Fannie Mae and repurchase for \$6.75 billion some residential mortgage loans it had sold to the government-controlled firm.

In addition, Bank of America will pay \$1.3 billion to ad-

dress mortgage servicing issues, Fannie Mae said in a separate statement.

Fannie Mae, the nation's largest mortgage buyer, said the deal would compensate it for actual and projected losses resulting from the loans.

The loans had been bundled into mortgage-backed securities and bought by the finance giant over 2000-2008, but had not met its underwriting standards.

As the housing bubble collapsed, Fannie Mae and sister firm Freddie Mac were reeling on the brink of bankruptcy from soured loans.

The government stepped in with a combined \$180 billion taxpayer-funded bailout in September 2008 and put both firms -- responsible for the bulk of US mortgages -- under the control of the Federal Housing Finance Agency. The government is not expected to recover much of the money it injected into the two.

The settlement announced Monday covers residential mortgage loans originated by Bank of America's own home loan unit and by entities re-

lated to Countrywide Financial Corporation, which the bank acquired in 2008.

The Charlotte, North Carolina-based bank estimated the measures would reduce pre-tax earnings for the 2012 fourth quarter by \$2.7 billion.

Separately, government regulators announced Monday a settlement with 10 mortgage servicers, including Bank of America, which will pay \$8.5 billion in cash and other assistance to borrowers hurt by the servicers' "deficient" practices.

Shares in Bank of America were flat at \$12.11 in morning trade in New York.

For the struggling bank, the Fannie Mae settlement marks another milestone in its efforts to extricate itself from the US mortgage crisis that shook global financial markets in 2007-2008 and sparked the US Great Recession.

Much of its problems stemmed from its acquisition of Countrywide, which was, at the height of the US housing boom in the 2000s, the largest mortgage origination company in the United States.

ware and services Eddy Cue.

There are more than 500 million active accounts at the App Store, which is stocked with more than 775,000 applications for iPhones, iPads, and iPod touch devices, according to Apple.

Apple said that the amount of money it has paid out to app makers has topped seven billion dollars.

A Temple Run game made for Apple gadgets by a husband-and-wife team at Imangi Studios was downloaded more than 75 million times, while the studios behind games DragonVale and Clash of Clans brought in a combined total of \$100 million.

"The success of our game Temple Run in 2012 was nothing short of astonishing," said Imangi Studios co-founder Keith Shepherd.

"We were simply looking to create a game that was fun and easy to play, but once it hit the App Store, the game took off."

The App Store is available in 155 countries.

YESTERDAY'S Crossword Answer



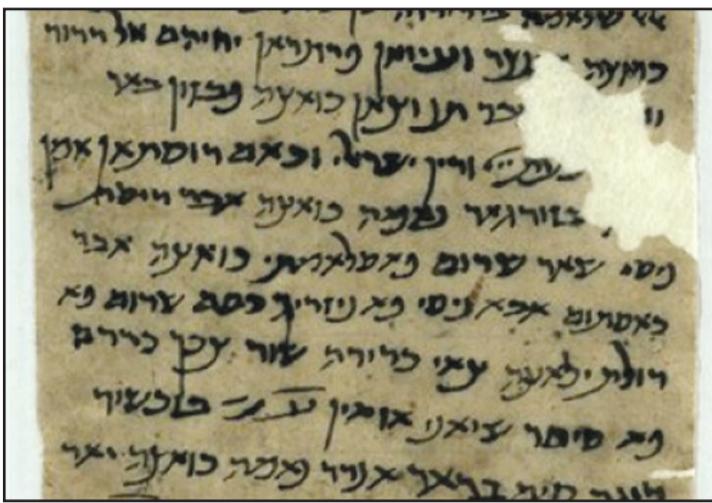
SAN FRANCISCO (AFP) -

Apple on Monday announced that more than 40 billion "apps" have been downloaded for its beloved gadgets, with the California company paying out billions of dollars to developers.

Nearly half of those downloads for iPhones, iPads, and iPod touch devices were done last year, with the App Store seeing a record-setting December in which two billion copies of mini-programs were snatched up.

"It has been an incredible year for the iOS developer community," said Apple senior vice president of Internet soft-

Ancient Afghan papers shed light on Jewish life



JERUSALEM (AFP) - A cache of 1,000-year-old documents written by the Jewish community in Afghanistan and unveiled in Jerusalem sheds unprecedented light on the mediaeval Jewish community in central Asia.

"This is the first time we have a large collection of documents representing the culture of the Jews who lived there" at the beginning of the 11th century, said academic director of the National Library of Israel, Professor Haggai Ben-Shammai.

The collection was discovered by chance in a cave inhabited by foxes some two years ago in northern Afghanistan.

The Afghan "Geniza," the Hebrew term for ritual Jewish disposal of documents with religious significance which cannot be thrown out but must be buried, contains hundreds of papers currently held by collectors and dealers around the world.

It was the farthest from Israel that such a discovery has been made, and the dry climate

of the cave kept the papers in excellent condition.

The national library recently acquired 29 items from the cache from a dealer in Jerusalem, and on Thursday displayed them to the media.

Ben-Shammai said the collection is rich with documents, some in Arabic and some in Hebrew script in the Judaeo-Persian dialect, which was prevalent at the time, and also in Hebrew and Arabic.

In addition to being the first ever documentation of the religious, cultural and commercial life of the Jewish community in a central location on the trade route between China and the West, it also contains yet unseen commentary by 10th century commentator Saadia Gaon on the book of Isaiah.

"Until now, we had no documents testifying to the presence of Jews" in this part of the Persian cultural domain, Ben-Shammai said, adding that the library was preparing to make the documents available worldwide via the Internet.

Epiphany celebrations



ISTAMBUL (AFP) : A Greek Orthodox swimmer kisses the wooden cross he retrieved from the Bosphorus river's Golden Horn after a mass as part of celebrations of the Epiphany day at the Church of Fener Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul, on January 6, 2013. The Orthodox faith uses the old Julian calendar in which Christmas falls 13 days after its more widespread Gregorian calendar counterpart on December 25.

Brad Pitt sets Chinese social media astir

BEIJING (AFP) - Hollywood heartthrob Brad Pitt made waves on Monday with his first post on Chinese social media, a cryptic message suggesting he would soon visit the country.

"It is the truth. Yup, I'm coming...", said the initial entry on the star's verified account on Sina Weibo, one of China's hugely popular Twitter-like microblogs.

It was unclear if the message from the star of "Fight Club", "Spy Game", "Ocean's Eleven" and other films meant that he would be physically coming to China.

Various Internet movie sites say Pitt was banned from entering the country after starring in "Seven Years in Tibet".

In 1997, the state-run China Daily said that Hollywood would "never be forgiven" for a series of films on the region, specifically citing Pitt's movie, along with Richard Gere's "Red Corner" and "Kundun", directed by Martin Scorsese.

China has long waged a campaign against Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, whom Beijing accuses of seeking independence for the troubled region, and the paper said the films "totally distorted historical facts and events".

But Pitt's Weibo account was an instant hit on Monday, drawing more than 100,000 followers within six hours of his first post.

"Bring Jolie along", said one comment, referring to Pitt's glamorous partner actress Angelina Jolie.

China imposes strict controls on the Internet and blocks sites popular in the West such as such as Twitter and Facebook.

Eat like a local at The Queen's restaurant at Palm Beach Plaza



Varella, Luisa and the next generation of chef



Keshi Yena with plaintains, vegetables and pica

An elegant décor with a breezy terrace overlooking Palm Beach welcomes guests to Varella Innocencia's very popular restaurant showcasing authentic local cuisine:

The Queen's

They may have moved from Oranjestad to hipper new digs in Palm Beach Plaza, but the food and prices are strictly native, which is what first won this charming eatery their loyal clientele. Varella's mom, Luisa, is still in the kitchen, conjuring up the delicious dishes that have been in her family for generations, acknowledged on the menu with items such as "Carni Stoba di Mamachi"- "Grandma's Beef Stew," and their Arawak Steak, along with local delicacies like Keshi Yena - "Full Cheese."

This is a tasty, filling stew of chicken, with other ingredients that are handy that day, all incased in a thick skin of melted Gouda. It was very satisfying and particularly memorable paired with The Queen's garlic bread and very special Pica, a mix of chopped onions and the famous local hot pepper, Madame Janette. Not overly spicy, it lends that perfect bit of tang to this deliciously picturesque meal.

One of the distinctions of Aruban cuisine is incorporating unique indigenous ingredients such as Wild Cucumber Stew and a particular light fish chowder accompanied by the local specialties pan bati (corn meal pancake) and funchi (the local version of polenta).

Seafood main courses range from Catch of the Day Aruban Style to shrimp and mixed seafood platter with shrimp, fish, squid, scallops and mussels. Meat dishes such as BBQ Chicken and Ribs or Grilled Tenderloin, each including a choice of 2 side dishes; all quite yummy and bargain-priced to boot!

The Queen's is located on the second level of Palm Beach Plaza, tucked into a cozy corner at the front of the mall. If you have a mind to try the real deal in Aruban food, without a doubt, this is the way to truly eat like a local. They are open from 11:00 AM to 11:00 PM, daily, offering indoor and outdoor dining. Aside from an extensive menu they also have daily specials made from whatever is in season and Mama Luisa is in the mood to prepare, so don't forget to ask about what isn't on the menu!

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5 Burgers Aruba: Now your best breakfast bargain!



A favorite stop for a great burger for lunch or dinner has just expanded their hours and menu to offer some of the best breakfast bargains to be found in Palm Beach. Owners Aaron and Rosie Walisever are living their dream: a home on paradise while welcoming all and sundry to their proud undertaking, 5 Burgers Aruba. The couple's fanatical dedication to giving their customers what they really want has resulted in a unique menu from an inter-

nationally known franchise with a "5", which now includes breakfast.

"You never get a second chance to make a first impression," believes Aaron. Upon entering 5 Burgers Aruba in The Village Mall in Palm Beach, one is struck by utterly spotless surroundings and a smiling, friendly, attentive service crew. Of course, the main item on the menu is burgers-the way they were meant to be, thick and juicy,

made fresh daily and 100% pure beef, the kind that made the hamburger a traditional American treat.

However, beginning at 7 a.m., patrons can now order 2 eggs any style, (omelets with 3 fillings are \$7.99) toast and coffee with unlimited refills for the special introductory price of only \$4.49, (\$5.48 with bacon) or All-you-can-eat pancakes, for \$6.99, again, with free refills on fresh coffee. Breakfast is served until 11 a.m. Famous for their fries made from fresh potatoes, Aaron has been working for months on devising the most irresistible home fries recipe, chunky and tender with skins still on; after much testing and tasting, he got the thumbs up from his harshest critic, Rosie; so this is another treat you have to try.

A glance at their burger menu will certainly tempt you to return for lunch or dinner, to sample their famous specialty items such as the Gouda, Farmer's or Man Burger (al-



most 12 ounces of choice beef), and a Western Burger with Aarons' secret-recipe crispy onion rings. All of these can be personalized with an incredible array of toppings, (mushrooms, jalapeño peppers, bacon, cheese, lettuce, tomato...whatever, the list goes on) at absolutely no extra cost.

5 Burger portions are ENORMOUS! Aaron suggests that even their small serving of fries is enough to be shared by

two. He was very amused to watch a famous French chef demonstrating the best way to make fried potatoes on a gourmet cooking show and could only comment "He stole my recipe!"

Try them the English way-with vinegar, and you'll wonder how you ever ate fries without it. This same 5-star chef also swears by Gouda as the best topping for the ideal gourmet cheeseburger.

5 Burgers is now open early until 10-ish at night; delivery is available to both the high-rise and low-rise hotel and beach district at now extra cost for orders over \$50. Enjoy a great lunch without ever leaving the beach by calling 586-3904. However, we suggest you stop by and enjoy their authentic, heartfelt hospitality; it is not unusual for either owner to sit and chat, sharing their knowledge of the island while making sure patrons are happy with their meal.

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SPORT



LIMA (AFP) - The Netherlands' Sjaak Martens (L) is seen on his KTM and Peru's Erick Meier Von Schierenbeck (R) is seen on his KTM during the 2013 Dakar Rally departure ceremony in Lima on January 5 2013.

NBA: Lawson shines as Nuggets down Lakers

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - Ty Lawson posted a double-double of 21 points and 10 assists Sunday to help Denver hand the Los Angeles Lakers a third straight NBA defeat, 112-105.

Danilo Gallinari scored 20 points and grabbed six rebounds for the Nuggets, draining a big three-pointer with 13.8 seconds remaining to stretch Denver's lead to 108-102 after Lakers star Kobe Bryant had trimmed the deficit to three points with a three-pointer.

Bryant led the Lakers with



JaVale McGee #34 of the Denver Nuggets knocks the ball away from Dwight Howard #12 of the Los Angeles Lakers

29 points, 18 of them in the fourth quarter. Dwight Howard scored 14 points and tied his career high of 26 rebounds with four blocked shots and Steve Nash added 10 points and 13 assists.

But Bryant said the Lakers had too many defensive lapses and too many mistakes, including 18 turnovers.

"We've just got to try to focus on the next one," Bryant said. "We've got to execute better ... we've got to buckle down and try to minimize mistakes."

Pau Gasol scored 11 points -- all in the first half, and departed in the fourth

quarter after an inadvertent elbow to his nose left him bleeding profusely.

Lakers coach Mike D'Antoni said he expected the Spaniard to be ready for the Lakers' next game at Houston on Tuesday.

D'Antoni admitted that the Lakers' slump -- which has seen them fall to 15-18 for the season -- increased the pressure on the team.

The Nuggets notched their fifth win in seven games. Andre Miller scored 12 points with 10 assists. JaVale McGee added 17 points, six rebounds, three steals and two blocked shots.



ZURICH (AFP) : (L-R) Real Madrid's Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo, Atletico Madrid's Colombian forward Radamel Falcao, Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi, Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Andres Iniesta, Barcelona's Xavi Hernandez, Real Madrid's Xabi Alonso, Real Madrid's Marcelo, Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos, Barcelona's Gerard Pique, Barcelona's Dani Alves and Real Madrid's Iker Casillas receive the FIFA/FIFPro World XI award during the FIFA Ballon d'Or awards ceremony at the Kongresshaus in Zurich yesterday.

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Tennis: Djokovic, Azarenka top seeds for Australian Open



file photo -Victoria Azerenka

SYDNEY (AFP) - World number ones Novak

Djokovic and Victoria Azarenka were named the top seeds on Monday for next week's Australian Open in Melbourne.

Djokovic, who beat Rafael Nadal in five sets in last year's final, will be bidding for his third successive Australian Open title at Melbourne Park.

Roger Federer, who has a record 17 grand slam titles in 24 finals, is the second seed ahead of



file photo - Djokovic

US Open champion Andy Murray and Spain's David Ferrer.

Nadal will miss the year-opening grand slam as he is suffering from a stomach virus.

Defending women's singles champion Azarenka is seeded ahead of last year's finalist, Russian Maria Sharapova, five-time winner Serena Williams and Poland's Wimbledon finalist Agnieszka Radwanska.

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NFL: Ravens down Colts, Seahawks surge past Redskins

BALTIMORE (AFP) - The Baltimore Ravens, with emotional team leader Ray Lewis back from injury, beat the Indianapolis Colts 24-9 on Sunday to reach the second round of the NFL playoffs.

Lewis, notched 13 tackles to lead a Ravens defense that held the Colts to three field goals by Adam Vinatieri and spoiled the post-season debut of rookie quarterback Andrew Luck.

Ravens defender Paul Kruger also excelled, registering 2 1/2 of the Ravens' three sacks of Luck and causing one of three turnovers by forcing a fumble.

Luck was one of three rookie quarterbacks in action Sunday, and it was Seattle's first-year signal-caller Russell Wilson who emerged with a victory, leading the Seahawks to a 24-14 victory over the Redskins in a National Conference contest in Washington.

Wilson out-played fellow Rookie of the Year candidate Robert Griffin III, who has battled a late-season knee injury and was held to just 84 yards with two touchdowns and an interception before his right knee gave out in the fourth quarter and he limped out of the contest.

Griffin, whose athleticism has made him a sensation in his rookie year, admitted he didn't know just how serious his injury was, but he wasn't sorry that he played hurt.

Wilson threw for 187 yards and a touchdown and added 68 rushing yards for Seattle.

Marshawn Lynch rushed for 131 yards and the go-ahead touchdown in the fourth quarter as the Seahawks fought back from an early 14-0 deficit.

However, his team scored the last 24 points of the game to advance to a second-round meeting with the Falcons in Atlanta next weekend.

The Ravens, who had been



Anquan Boldin #81 of the Baltimore Ravens scores an 18-yard touchdown reception in the fourth quarter against Darius Butler #20 of the Indianapolis Colts

unable to beat the Colts in the playoffs in the years that the Indianapolis offense was run by quarterback great Peyton Manning, earned a second-round meeting with Manning and his new team -- the American Conference top-seeded Denver Broncos.

Baltimore signal-caller Joe Flacco threw a pair of touchdown passes, and Anquan Boldin amassed 145 yards and a touchdown.

The defeat was the end of an emotional season for the Colts, who thrived despite the inexperience of Luck and the lengthy absence of head coach Chuck Pagano as he underwent treatment for leukemia.

Pagano, who spent four years as an assistant coach in Baltimore, returned to the sidelines in time for the final regular-season game and the playoff contest against his old team.

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Football: Messi wins record fourth Ballon d'Or



ZURICH (AFP) - Lionel Messi added yet another record to his stellar list of achievements over the past 12 months on Monday when he won an unprecedented fourth, consecutive, Ballon d'Or at a FIFA gala in Zurich.

The accolade seals Messi's status as the greatest player of

his generation after he saw off Real Madrid rival Cristiano Ronaldo and Barcelona teammate Andres Iniesta for the prize.

Messi received a vote share of 41.60 percent to 23.68 for Ronaldo and 10.91 for Iniesta.

Messi and former French star, UEFA president Michel

Platini, had prior to Monday been the only players to win three straight Ballon d'Or awards while Dutch greats Johan Cruyff and Marco Van Basten both won the accolade on three occasions.

Spain's Vicente del Bosque was named coach of the year for 2012, seeing off competition from Real Madrid's Jose Mourinho and former Barcelona coach Josep Guardiola.

Messi's success crowned another landmark year for the Argentine who is already the top scorer in La Liga for the ongoing season with 25 goals, having also broken Gerd Mueller's 40-year record for the most goals in a calendar year.

He finished 2012 with an astonishing 91 goals in all

competitions.

But Messi has insisted his scoring records will mean nothing if Barcelona do not go on to take the La Liga title off Real or fail to win the Champions League.

"It is incredible to receive this prize once again and it's impressive it makes it four in a row. I would like to share this with my Barca teammates - particularly with Andres, who is here with me," said the ever unassuming Messi.

"I am proud to be able to train alongside him every day. I am also thinking of my teammates in the Argentina squad," he went on. "Thank you to all those who voted for me, skippers, coaches and national coaches."

"Thank you too to my fam-

ily, my friends and of course my wife and son, who is the best thing that ever happened to me," said the 25-year-old from Rosario, who in November became a father to son Thiago.

"It's nice to beat records but the win for the team is what is important. My goals are to win titles with the team, the Spanish league, Spanish Cup or Champions League is more important than any personal records."

"Leo's great quality is that he plays as if he is still a child," Barca coach Tito Vilanova opined.

Until he can lift top honours with Argentina, some observers will insist he cannot be classed as the greatest player ever, moving ahead of Pele and Diego Maradona.



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